While most of the time of our delegate, Bill Crawford, and Chapter Advisor, Professor Pfeiffer, was taken up by official work, the remainder of our party upheld the reputation of Texas by visiting all the points of special interest, particularly those of "higher learning."

We left Lincoln for Dallas at 2:30 p.m., Friday, stopping at Newton, Kansas, Oklahoma City, and several unscheduled stops, returning to Dallas in time to listen to the SMU - Arkansas football game.

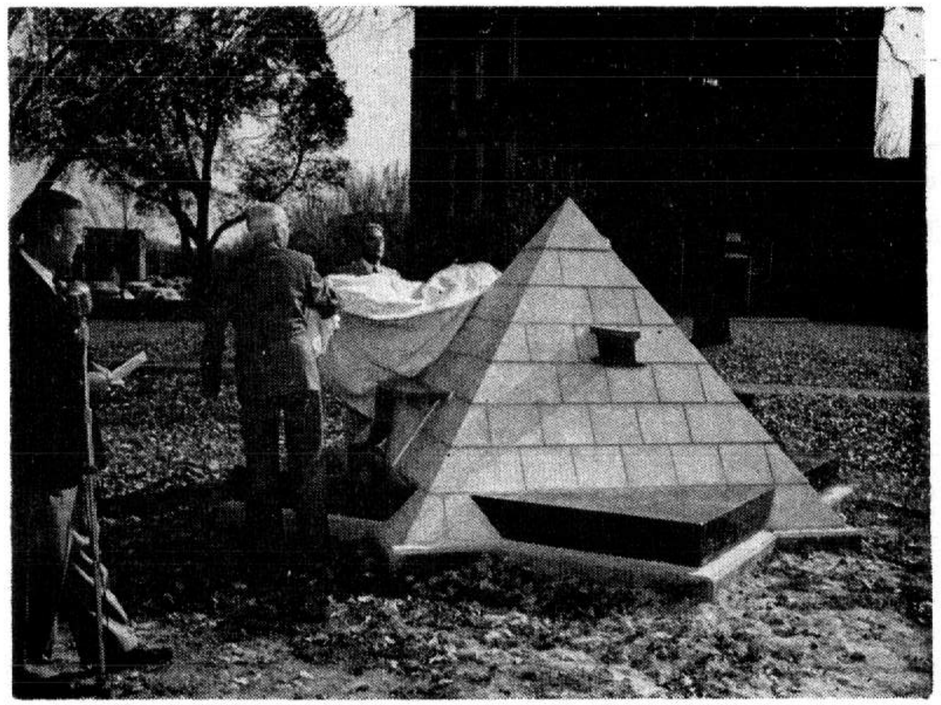
A summary of the opinions of the group can be expressed as follows:

1. "The girls in Nebraska are not as pretty as those in Texas."
2. "We were most fortunate to have Dallas weather for our visit to Lincoln."
3. "The average gasoline mileage on the Nash was 26 miles per gallon, and on the Plymouth, 18 miles per gallon."
4. "The average speed, including all stops, was 42 miles per hour. The maximum speed was 70 miles per hour, and the minimum was 25 miles per hour on the highway between Lincoln and the Kansas state line."
5. "The price of gas was highest in Nebraska."

The total man-miles travelled was 8,100.

The trip to Lincoln, Nebraska, and attending the 50th anniversary conclave were enjoyed by all. It was a worthwhile experience for everyone who was fortunate to attend the inspiring meeting and the several interesting unofficial gatherings. The members of the SMU chapter are looking forward to having the largest delegation at the next conclave and during the coming semesters plan to put into action some of the ideas received during this great national meeting.

Winter 1954



Founders Davidson, Stevens and Hedge unveil Alpha Chapter's new monument. Left, Bob Peterson, Master of Ceremonies.

ALPHA CHAPTER'S NEW PYRAMID

By Robert E. Peterson, Alpha '54

Brother Sjogren has asked me to record events of the construction and dedication of our new pyramid for present and future interest. Memories may be slightly dim already but I shall do my best to provide that record.

Our first pyramid, of reinforced concrete, was built in 1924 at a cost of about $85. Its replacement was seriously considered as early as 1947 when a solid granite pyramid was priced. Suitably humbled by that information, we made the old monument do until 1951 when a new hazard appeared. The university Department of Buildings and Grounds informed us that the old pyramid detracted from the westerly view of the newly-completed Ferguson Hall and should therefore be removed. It was then our choice to move the old pyramid or build another one. The active chapter decided to build a new monument, financed if possible by contributions from alumni.

In early 1952 a competition was held to secure a design for the new pyramid. John Peterson, Arch E '53, submitted the winning design. He was then employed to prepare a preliminary plan from

which our original estimate of cost was made and which was the parent of our final plan.

Fund-raising drives were conducted in the fall of 1952 and 1953. The total raised was slightly over $3000. As our latest bid for construction of the pyramid was in the neighborhood of $6000, it became obvious that our plans would have to be revised.

Reducing the size of the pyramid was one alternative we did not wish to use. We decided to do all possible work ourselves rather than employ a general contractor. We discovered that a floating slab could be used in place of the deep footings shown on our original plan. We decided to omit, at least for the present, the freeform area around the pyramid. These changes put our planning on a more realistic basis.

Decisions then had to be made as to construction details. The first problem was just how to reinforce the foundation slab. We decided to design it in such a manner that it could be jacked up and moved to another site should that be made necessary by future campus changes. Portability was definitely not one of the attributes of the old pyramid.

Another question arose with respect to the stone veneer. The preliminary plan showed blocks of trapezoidal cross-section resting upon a concrete block core. This method of construction had the advantage of presenting horizontal mortar joints to the weather rather than joints normal to the pyramid's surface. Our granite supplier advised us, however, that granite cut in this manner would cost $1000 more than flat slabs. This suggested a method of construction using flat granite slabs lying against a flat core, possibly made of four precast, tilt-up, concrete sections. We still worried about water running in the upturned joints however. Since we could not bring ourselves to pay $1000 extra for blocks cut according to the first plan and didn't have that much money anyway, we were forced into a new decision—that of using Bedford limestone for all exterior except the four slabs at the base. (They were to remain black granite.) The limestone could be cut in the desired shape at little extra cost.

We reasoned that, even though the limestone would not be as resistant to vandalism and weathering, it would look very nice and should last at least fifty years. The greatest hazard that the monument would face, we decided, was that of looking old-fashioned to a later generation with a better idea of what the Sigma Tau pyramid should look like. This would probably happen before it was actually

"worn out" regardless of the materials. Furthermore, the use of limestone would save so much money that we might have some left over—a thing unheard of on projects of this sort. We could even go so far as to invest what was left to finance these pyramid-builders of the future.

In the early fall of 1953 we were ready to begin construction but found that the location had never been definitely settled, despite a series of conferences and letters on the subject. It was finally necessary to build a full size cardboard mock-up of the pyramid and place it in the various locations under discussion before a decision could be made that was satisfactory to all concerned.

These discussions and requests for permission to build delayed our start until late November, 1953. It was then that we broke ground and set our forms but not until an unseasonably warm spell in February were we able to pour concrete for our foundation.

The period of time between the pouring of the foundation and the start of stone laying on November 1, 1954, was one of seemingly endless delays. Some were caused by the fact that we were supposed to be students as well as pyramid builders, others were caused by our suppliers and still others were due to just plain inertia of rest. It was during this period that we made the delightful discovery that the partially completed patterns for our letters had been destroyed by mistake. The decision was then made to have the letters fabricated of heavy steel plate and electroplated with bronze. (The rail, by the way, was given us by the Union Pacific Railroad and is the heaviest they use at the present time. It, too, is bronze planted.)

The stone laying was not without its tense moments. Our mason was one of the best in the city but of course hadn't laid many pyramids. Snow flurries greeted us the day we started. The time capsule was hastily filled and inserted on the second day. On the third day our capstone disappeared but was located on the lawn of one of the campus sororities. The fourth day brought the discovery that four pieces of cut stone were missing, possibly now serving as door stops somewhere on campus. A quick trip to the stone cutter, a two day delay, and the job was done, a whole five days before dedication ceremonies.

The dedication took place on November 11, 1954. The program was opened by Sphinx Philbrick. My comments on the construction of the monument were next. Three of our founders, Davidson, Hedge, and Stevens, then unveiled the new pyramid. It was then my privilege to make the following remarks which I considered appropriate:

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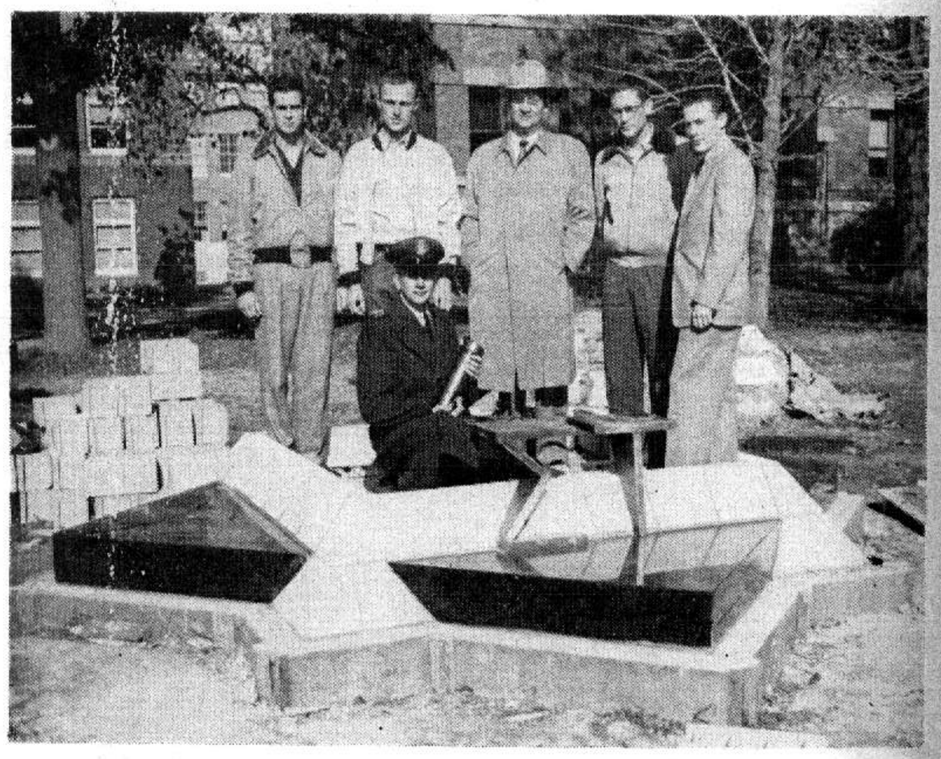
"There it stands, pyramid and rail section on an eight-pointed base formed by the intersection of two squares. The points have been accurately aligned with the major directions of the compass by solar observation.

"We anticipate that this pyramid will be of more practical value than monuments commemorating only past events or persons. We hope that it will be a **living** monument to a **living** fraternity, arousing curiosity in the minds of younger students about its meaning. Then, after these students have learned of Sigma Tau and become members by proving that they possess the qualities we consider necessary to a good engineer, it will serve to remind them of their obligation to the engineering profession and to the fraternity.

"Therefore, on behalf of Alpha Chapter, the alumni who provided the funds, and the students who provided the labor, I would like to dedicate this pyramid to the foresight of our founders and the future of the engineering profession."

Then, because the monument rests upon the engineering campus



Alpha Chapter's Pyramid under construction. Dan Rasdal, center, holds time capsule containing many predictions which was buried in corner stone. Left to right, standing: Gene Yost; Ted Sazama; Prof. Ludwickson, chapter advisor; Robert Peterson; John Davies.

and is a part of it, we felt that it would be appropriate to entrust its safekeeping to the College of Engineering and Architecture. Dean O. J. Ferguson accepted the responsibility on behalf of the college with the following words:

(Thoughts presented by O. J. Ferguson)

As I look at this beautiful pyramid, two thoughts occupy my mind. The first one of these will stand without much argument, since it is a commonly accepted statement. The second one may not be so readily believed. It may even come with a shock.

My first thought, then, is that engineers are practical-minded men. You are musing, 'Why present such a cliche?" And, of course, we accept the idea the more promptly, because it is flattering to us. We like it. We lap it up. But, it is the post upon which I hinge my second statement.

My other thought will seem paradoxical to you, when I assert—Nothing in the world is more practical than an ideal! I repeat—**Nothing in the world is more practical than an ideal!!**

This will take a bit of thinking. But, when you scan the list of all of the great advances that man has made, you will find an ideal behind each one—an ideal of service, an ideal of achievement, an ideal of justice, an ideal of virtue—an ideal without which man's efforts would have bogged down and failed; an ideal which drove man to attain some noble end, and perhaps even die in the doing.

Is there anything more forcefully practical than that?

And, we love symbols. We prize them because they keep us reminded of things we cherish. That is why this Pyramid is worth while. It is a constant reminder to us of the worthy ideals of Sigma Tau.

With these thoughts in mind, I am very happy to accept, for the College of Engineering and Architecture, from Alpha Chapter of Sigma Tau, custody of this beautiful symbol of the ideals of Sigma Tau. May we who look upon it here today, and, after us, all who come this way, be zealous followers of such ideals.